

Rules of the Game

All About Grappling (Part Three)

By Skip Williams



Last week we looked at your options when **grappling**. This week we'll consider your options when you're pinning a foe or being **pinned**.

The Effects of Being Pinned

As noted last week, a pinned character is held immobile (but not helpless) for 1 **round**. While you're pinned, you take a -4 **penalty** to your AC against opponents other than the one pinning you. At your opponent's option, you may also be unable to speak.

Your Options While Pinned

You can speak while pinned only if your opponent has not chosen to keep you from speaking. If your foe allows you to speak, you can **cast a spell** with a verbal component, provided that the spell does not have a somatic component, provided that the spell has a **casting time** no longer than one **standard action**, and provided that you have any required material or focus components in hand. You must make a Concentration **check** to cast the spell, as noted in Part Two. You cannot use a **full-round action** to retrieve a spell component you need as you can when merely grappling. The Still Spell and Silent Spell metamagic feats can prove useful for casting spells while grappling, provided that using the feat doesn't increase the spell's casting time to more than 1 standard action (as it would for a **bard** or **sorcerer**).

A **spell-like ability** has no verbal, somatic, material, focus, or **XP** components, so you can use one while pinned. To do so, you must make a Concentration check; the **DC** for the check is exactly the same as it would be if you were casting a spell. See [Rules of the Game](#) for more information on spell-like abilities.

As you might expect, you can't move out of the **space** you share with a foe that has pinned you. You cannot take any other actions except to make an opposed grapple check to escape the pin in place of an attack. You can make an Escape Artist check in place of your grapple check if you want, but this requires a standard action. If you win the opposed check, you escape the pin, but you're still grappling. If your **base attack bonus** allows you to make multiple attacks, you can attempt to escape the pin multiple times (at successively lower attack bonuses). If you escape the pin, you're still grappling with your foe, but if you still have attacks available, you can keep right on grappling, as noted in Part Two.

Your Options While Pinning an Opponent

Holding another creature immobile takes quite a bit of effort, so your options while pinning another creature are pretty limited, but you do have an advantage over a foe you have pinned. Pages 156-157 in the *Player's*

Handbook describe what you can and cannot do when you have a foe pinned.

You cannot can't draw or use a weapon (against the pinned character or any other character), escape another's grapple, retrieve a spell component, pin another character, or break another's pin while you are pinning an opponent.

You can attempt to damage your opponent with an opposed grapple check, use your opponent's weapon against him, or attempt to move the grapple (all described in Part Two). You also can cast a spell as described above.

Pinning a foe makes some new grappling maneuvers available to you:

Snatch Items: You can use a disarm action to remove or grab away a well-secured object worn by a pinned opponent, but he gets a +4 bonus on his roll to resist your attempt (see the Disarm action on page 155 in the *Player's Handbook*). Because your pinned foe can't attack, your attempt to disarm your foe doesn't provoke an **attack of opportunity** from that foe.

Release Your Foe: When you have a foe pinned, you're more or less in control of the situation. You can voluntarily release a pinned foe as a **free action**; if you do so, you are no longer considered to be grappling that character (and vice versa).

Once released, your foe must go to a space adjacent to the space the two of you once shared. The movement provokes attacks of opportunity from foes who threaten the space your foe leaves, but the movement doesn't count against the foe's speed for the current turn.

Other Options While Pinning an Opponent

Here are a few optional maneuvers for use against a foe you've pinned.

Throw Your Foe to the Ground: Make an opposed grapple check as a **melee attack**. If you win, your foe winds up **prone** in any **square** adjacent to the square you and your foe formerly shared. The movement provokes attacks of opportunity from enemies who **threaten** the space your foe leaves, but the movement doesn't count against the foe's **speed** for the current **turn**. You stay on your feet in the space you formerly shared with your foe and you and your foe are no longer grappling.

Toss Your Foe: Make an opposed grapple check as a **melee attack**. If you succeed, you can literally pick up your foe (provided you can lift your foe's weight). Make a **Strength** check; if your result is at least 10, you toss your foe 5 feet. For every 5 points your Strength check result exceeds 10, you toss your foe another 5 feet, to a maximum of 25 feet.

Move Your Foe: Make an opposed grapple check as a melee attack. If you win, you shift your foe into any square adjacent to the square you and your foe formerly shared. You must be able to carry or drag your foe's weight to move your foe.

You can stay in the space you and foe formerly shared; if you do, you release your foe and are no longer grappling. You also can choose to move along with your foe; if you do, your foe remains pinned. The movement provokes attacks of opportunity from enemies who threaten the space you or your foe leaves, but the movement

doesn't count against you or your foe's speed for the current turn.

What's Next?

That covers the maneuvers you can use when pinning a foe or when pinned. Next time, we'll wrap up our look at grappling with a few odds and ends.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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